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ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C 16NEW YORK TIMES
23 November 1982

"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I REALIZED THAT MY GOVERNMENT ACTIVELY WAS INVOLVED IN PLANNING TO KILL PEOPLE."

—Yeoman Charles E. Radford

Radford, who arrived at his new post a few weeks after the Chilean election, vividly recalls the sense of crisis: "This wasn't supposed to happen. It was a real blow. All of a sudden, the pudding blew up on the stove."

Allende [had] defied the public-opinion polls and won the Chilean election by 39,000 votes out of the 3 million cast.... The reaction in Washington was more than just despair; there was rage at Allende for having defied the wishes of American policymakers.

Over the next few weeks, Radford says, he saw many sensitive memoranda and options papers, as the bureaucracy sought to prevent Allende from assuming office. Among the options was a proposal to assassinate Allende.

There is compelling evidence that Nixon's tough stance against Allende in 1970 was predominantly shaped by his concern for the future of the American corporations whose assets, he believed, would be seized by the Allende government. His intelligence agencies, while quick to condemn the spread of Marxism in Latin America, reported that Allende posed no threat to national security.

In a later conversation with a close associate, Helms provided a much more credible description of what took place on September 15: Nixon had specifically ordered the CIA to get rid of Allende. Helms told the associate there was no doubt in his mind at the time what Nixon meant.

Another senior CIA official, who spent years dealing with Cuba and Latin America, explained the technique more directly in an interview: "All a President would have to say is something innocuous—'We wish he wasn't here.'"

In the days that followed Richard Nixon's emotional charge to Richard Helms, the CIA reached deep into its resources to perform what many of its senior officers believed was a real-life "Mission Impossible." Without itself being exposed, and within six weeks of a closely watched runoff election in the Chilean Congress, the Agency had to increase its direct involvement with leading members of opposition groups and provide arms, money and promises in support of a coup. The goal was to get rid of Allende, as the President demanded.

From *The Price of Power: Kissinger, Nixon, and Chile*, by Seymour M. Hersh. The second of two articles adapted from his forthcoming book. In the December issue of *The Atlantic*.

